

Summary of Watershed-Based Mitigation Subcommittee Meeting

July 20, 2004, 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Natural Resources Building Training Room (Room 175), Olympia

Meeting began at 10:00

Attendees:

Annie Szvetcz (Ecology); Peter Birch, Bob Zeigler, Margen Carlson, and John Carleton (Fish and Wildlife); Jay Udelhoven (Natural Resources); Carrie Berry, Dick Gersib, Gary Davis, and Tim Hilliard (Transportation); Phil Miller (Governor's Salmon Recovery Office); Darrel Phare (Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission); Rick Anderson (Applied Hydrology NW); Kate Stenberg (US Army Corps of Engineers); and Ashley Probart (Association of Washington Cities).

Updates:

- Co-chairs Peter Birch and Dick Gersib discussed the last TPEAC meeting.
- Bob Zeigler mentioned that Tim Beechie (NOAA Fisheries Science Center's Watershed Program) sent an abstract on a paper they have presented on process-based principles for restoring dynamic ecosystems. He would be willing to come to discuss their studies and preliminary findings at a fall Watershed Subcommittee meeting in Olympia.
- Darrell Phare discussed Tribal involvement and mentioned the Tribes are now trying to formulate an entire picture and deciding at what point they sit down and comment on proposals. He mentioned that the burial site at the proposed Port Angeles graving site dates back to 1790 and the Suquamish, Port Gamble and Clallam Tribes have an interest. Early involvement is most beneficial.
- Phil Miller questioned about interaction on the methods. Dick clarified that the WSDOT Watershed Technical Team updates the methods document with each characterization project.

I-405 Technical Team Study area report – Tim Hilliard, Dick Gersib

Addressing impacts of three projects on I-405 (I-90 to Bothell), as well as three projects on SR-522 (Lake WA to E. Sammamish Parkway). The study area is all of Sammamish drainage except Swamp Cr., plus Lake WA drainages between Coal and Sammamish – this is an area of 300 sq. miles! It includes all or part of 15 cities, two counties, plus part of the Usual and Accustomed Area of the Muckleshoot Tribe. The timeline is to have a prioritized potential mitigation site list to the project team by the end of September and a full draft report soon after that.

Coordination with all parties is important; so far meetings have included one with Muckleshoot staff on 7-7 and one with local and state agency folks on 7-14. They have also restarted the use of regular status reports after positive response from last time. Updated web pages reflect the ongoing project and have an archive of the status reports.

There are a number of new aspects since the last two studies. One is scale – they are addressing not just one highway project but six, and using a 300 sq. mile study area. Also, they are still focusing on

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priority lists for sites to mitigate impacts on stormwater flow and ecosystem function, but are now adding a list to prioritize sites to mitigate impacts on stream health and habitat. Some other changes are: they are investigating the use of FRAGSTATS software to analyze habitat connectivity; trying to improve methodology for watershed-based avoidance and minimization of impacts to wetlands; investigating adding a component to the methodology to address hydrologic connectivity; continuing to work with Ecology to formalize the use of landscape-based mitigation for stormwater flow; continuing to refine and implement the early screening tool for watershed-based mitigation; and trying to improve communication before, during, after study.

Phil Miller mentioned it would be important to get projects on the ground in terms of any real world effect of the watershed mitigation work by January (before leg session). Peter Birch asked if they were using SSHIAP data in this test and they said they would if they get it in time, but don't have it yet. Dick said they would like to have at least stream gradient data. Darrell Phare said if there was a problem with delivering the data and he had been aware of it he might have been able to facilitate delivery of that data. It was mentioned that the Kirkland portion of I-405 was "design-build" and there were questions about how it would interface when mitigation is actually decided on.

Federal Watershed Approach and Watershed D.C. Meeting – Dick Gersib

Dick discussed his visit to Washington D.C. for the meeting on the National Watershed Mitigation. He noted that there were only two presenters that actually had watershed characterization as an objective. Most people were doing site specific work at large scale instead of watershed planning. Most of the participants were working on policy.

Bob Zeigler mentioned that recent reports have been published discussing On and Off-Site and Out-of-Kind mitigation and Stream Assessments. Dick mentioned that North Carolina had an in lieu fee program for watersheds. Ashley Probart pointed out the state owns the all the roads in North Carolina.

Governor Office Effort on Watershed Mitigation – Margen Carlson

Margen Carlson discussed the two statewide watershed efforts. One is a WDFW effort headed by Tim Smith on Mitigation Optimization. This came from a bill authorizing \$90,000 to look at mitigation beyond transportation and wind power. Tim Smith, Scott Boettcher (Ecology), Phil Miller, Barb Aberle, Dan Evans and Peter Downey participate in this work. They were looking to optimize environmental results. They are interested in Watershed Screening tools and are looking at how Gersib's watershed characterization might fit into the effort. They are also looking at the Phase 3 effort using existing information. The second is a Governor's Office Watershed Health Effort headed by Bob Nichols and Jim Fox of GSRO. This looked at voluntary efforts, BPA, 2514, and 2496 subbasin planning. OFM is concerned about the planning process and integrating efforts. They are considering one statewide board that would integrate and coordinate all the efforts. The status of this effort is uncertain.

Phil Miller mentioned the interdependence of watershed efforts. If the policies do not work, there needs to be guidance on how to accomplish the work. He said that in Mitigation Optimization there was value to be refined and evaluation of what was technically sound and how to incorporate local watershed work. He said there also need to be "Transaction Guidelines" or guidance on the permit

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process and define a low end range and a middle range and a high end range that would go through a different process.

It was suggested that Tim Smith give his presentation at the next Watershed Subcommittee meet on August 17th and that Phil Miller discusses their report at the September meeting.

Project Update and Selection Criteria, also Draft IMG Workplan - Rick Anderson

Rick Anderson discussed the pilot proposals: SR 539 widening from North of Bellingham to Lynden; SR4 seven mile guardrail upgrade and shoulders widened in Cowlitz County; and US 12 widening near Wall Walla. On US 12, the engineer has some concerns and is again reviewing the scope of work. On SR 539 they are looking at moving the advertisement date up to 2005. For this project there is a 2514 process and WRIA planning process in final form. CNS Irrigation District Management Plan is similar to an HCP light and Water Planning light on subbasins in the north end. It was mentioned that we need to be careful in managing expectations and between US 12 in Walla Walla and SR 539 in Whatcom County, we have a couple of opportunities to make group decisions and test the phase III report.

Ashley Probart has since outlined some questions to test:

1. Is project delivery enhanced?
2. Are watershed's improved?
3. Does the IMG provide enough guidance/tools/data to allow staff/consultants to obtain the right information to "feed" the project delivery component and concurrently describe the proposed impacts (positive or negatively) to a watershed?

Ashley pointed out that the SR 539 project might be a sink-or-swim proposal because two of the four TPEAC legislators represent that area (Senator Haugen and Representative Erickson). We may have limited opportunity to demonstrate that we have a method that is faster and better and not additive. Phil Miller mentioned that we need to build the lead entities into the processes. They need to be involved in the Interagency Project Team or, alternatively, we would need to go to them in the process. We would have to identify who are the key contacts at the Interagency Project Team level. Phil recommended a local enhancement group lead instead of WDFW, WSDOT or Ecology leads.

Rick Anderson asked each agency to immediately identify a policy person, a permitting lead, and a planning lead for watershed planning work for him for the pilots. He needs contacts for agency planning, regulatory and administrative staff coordinated for these efforts. It was also mentioned that we might need a Project Delivery Test with a unified schedule contrasted with a Watershed Mitigation test.

Next Meeting:

Next subcommittee meeting is Tuesday, August 17, in Room 175A of the natural Resources Building. The agenda might include Tim Smith's Presentation on Mitigation Optimization Effort and Rick Anderson's Pilot Project reports and needs.

Meeting adjourned 3:00 PM